

The Role of Passion in Learning and Teaching

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Abstract: Passion has a motivating factor; therefore, it is a significant need for high quality learning and teaching. Passion is seeking for the new, and experiencing new ideas. Passion is on the basis of effective teaching. Passion which is indispensable for learning and teaching facilitates learning thorough desire and enthusiasm it creates. Passionate teachers via creating effective learning environments endeavor to increase learning potentials of their students. This study focuses on differences passionate teachers make, and points out the effects of passion on effective learning and teaching.

Keywords: Passion, Passionate Teacher, Effective Learning and Teaching, Commitment

1. What is Passion?

Passion is learning something new, giving importance. It is constantly being in search for the new and in the effort of learning. Passion has the ability to transmit and create action. Passion is motivation, seeking for the new and willingness to learn. Passion is simply showing a strong tendency and willingness through spending time and energy on an activity that someone likes or believes that it is important (Carbonneau, Vallerand, Fernet & Guay, 2008). Being passionate is closely related to learning and experiencing new ideas. According to Day, passion is identified with hope, loyalty, care, and enthusiasm, which are key features of effective teaching (2004). Passion is an important factor in inspiring teachers and motivating them.

2. Who is a Passionate Teacher?

Fried (2001) describes a passionate teacher as someone who is in love with the field of knowledge, deeply excited about the ideas that change our world, and closely interested in the potentials and dilemmas of young people who come to class every day. Similarly, Zehm and Kottler (1993) define passionate teachers as those who love the work they do. Passion is essential for quality and effective learning. It is a factor that increases the performance of teachers, and encourages them for more student achievement. Passionate teachers are committed to creating an effective learning environment and increase the learning potential of students. Passion contributes to creativity, thus passionate teachers have more thinking skills and can easily produce new ideas. Passionate teachers are committed to the

schools they work for and a good educational achievement is a good result of this commitment. According to Olson (2003), when we discover our passions about teaching and learning and share them with others, the doors are open, and everything becomes possible.

3. What is the Role of Passion in Learning and Teaching?

Passion, which is based on commitment, is at the heart of effective teaching. Day suggests that (2004), “passion is not an option. It is a necessity for a higher education”(p.11). Passion creates motivation, hence encourages teachers to act (Vallerand, 2007). For this reason, passionate teachers can create excitement that influences learning. Hargreaves (1997, p. 17), emphasizing the link between learning and education argues that all pedagogical approaches fail unless passion is created in the classroom. Passionate teachers like their job, and they are aware of the effect of passion on student success. The influence of passion for learning and teaching is indisputable, for this reason passionate teachers are always in an effort to increase student achievement. Hansen (2001) defines passionate teachers as people who truly believe that teaching energizes them compared with those who have lost faith and put less effort into their jobs. An enthusiastic teacher can encourage students and turn them into passionate individuals to achieve more successful outcomes. Fink (2003) states that when students attach importance to something they become more energetic and willing to learn.

One of the most important elements in the development of passion for teaching is the commitment and dedication of teachers to students and their learning. Passionate teachers are strongly committed to their work and can inspire their students and awaken their desire to learn. Fox (1964) states that the power of a profession is measured by the commitment of those who do it and he goes on to say that it is the same with teaching. Fox emphasizes that passion is a distinctive feature for teachers and that it has a positive effect on student achievement. Kushman (1992) and Rosenholtz (1989) found a link between teacher commitment and student achievement. Fried (2001) supports this idea by saying that there is a relationship between passionate teaching and quality education and explains its reasons in the following way:

- if students know that the teacher has a high level of interest in the subject and puts a high standard on them, they will become more serious. At this point, teaching is no longer a job done by force and turns into an inspiration for the students.
- unless a collaborative learning environment and a desire to take risks is created in the classroom a relationship between the teacher and the student is established.
- students will be less motivated to learn if they do not know how to apply what they learn in their lives.

Passionate teachers know that it is their responsibility to encourage students and they are always interested in their development. Passionate teachers work with enthusiasm, constantly increase their devotion and commitment and they believe in the importance of their job. Thapan (1986) argues that teaching commitment affects teachers' behavior, attitudes, perceptions and performance. Passionate teachers always search and endeavor to increase their skills as these factors are essential for continuous teaching.

The first feature of passionate teachers is that they share their strengths, knowledge and love with their students. They create different learning conditions in their field to guide their students. As a second feature, passionate teachers accept themselves as a part of learning process and pass on this passion to their students. They can motivate students who have less experience and are less motivated.

According to Hansene (1995), teaching for a passionate teacher is

- knowing what they did not know before
- learning what they could not do before
- obtaining attitudes which they did not have before
- believing what they did not believe before

Passion is a feeling that your mind is strongly influenced. Passion is a guiding, a motivating element that emanates from emotional power. Through passion, one can reach the targets. Passionate teachers are not the ones who are only willing to plan the next lesson. They are always engaged in teaching by looking at it from different focuses. Rest (1986) states that passionate teachers are those who constantly try to develop themselves, explore, encourage environment, reflect what they know, make plans, set targets, and take risks and responsibility.

Passionate teachers can make a difference in students' lives and achievements. Passionate teachers accomplish this with who they are, what they know (field knowledge) and how they teach (beliefs, attitudes, personal and professional values). Rowe (2003) argues that teacher quality is a key variable in student experience and school achievement. Konstantipolos (2006) suggests that teacher efficacy is greater than school efficacy in student achievement. The passionate teacher is always in the effort of professional development because he constantly aims at student success. Fried (2001) stresses that passion is witnessed in three places in teaching:

- teachers are committed to their fields
- teachers are passionate about the events that go on in the world
- teachers are committed to students

Passionate teachers are always in the effort of professional development because they constantly aim at development of students. According to Fried, passion is not a personal feature which is found in some people and not found in others, passion is discoverable, teachable and reproducible (2004). Passion is increased or decreased according to personal and social status. Five key qualities seen in passionate teachers are (Day, 2009):

- technical and personal skills, deep knowledge and empathy with students.
- good teachers give importance to students and they see students as an important part of their job and take care of their success
- reflect their educational ideals and beliefs as they are crucial to the motivation, commitment and effectiveness
- teachers understand the feelings of the people around themselves. Good learning requires the use of good knowledge together with emotion.

- being an effective teacher requires hope. When faced with difficulties, they need to be capable of finding solutions.

Fried (2001) lists 10 essential characteristics of passionate teachers as follows:

- they like to work with young people, new knowledge and ideas
- the lack of knowledge and ability of students is not an excuse to diminish their love for them
- give importance to students
- they are aware of world affairs and class issues, and reflect them effectively
- they work seriously, and possess wit
- they can tolerate the meaningless behaviors of students and at the same time they are very sensitive to the good behaviors students should acquire
- they avoid criticizing ideas and strive to create mutual respect
- they take risks, and like all people they can make mistakes, but they learn from these mistakes.
- they try to create an effective learning environment where students learn from their own mistakes
- they take their job seriously and clearly express their ideas and beliefs.

4. Conclusion

Passion is a significant factor that can contribute to student achievement. Passionate teachers who are strongly committed to their work can make a positive difference in student achievement. In addition to being a motivating factor, passion can influence learning and teaching positively by creating excitement and action.

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